

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Evolution of the Elmdale

Re: Restaurateur works to calm upset music fans, Nov. 5.

Sure, the old Elmdale House Tavern's ways will be missed, but at least it won't be turning into another shawarma shop like Tucson's Roadhouse did. Not that I see anything wrong with a good shawarma, but to keep the bar-like nature in the small night scene that Ottawa has is highly appreciated.

It's hard to blame owners who sell their venues in a time when people aren't as apt to get up and go out to see live music. Prices are rising, entertainment is at our fingertips and people are living in a new fast-paced world that no longer requires them to leave their home. This is no time for the live entertainment industry, so to own such a venue can be a scary operation.

From the sounds of it, the Elmdale has lucked out. Joshua Bishop, who will be the new owner, sounds like the right guy to run the operation. He has not said that live entertainment will be completely taken away, just featured on weekends. Rather than whining about having a new owner in January, we should appreciate that he has the heart to keep the arts and entertainment going within the building.

Cheers to keeping Ottawa's bar scene alive and not adding another great shawarma shop to the many we already have.

ALEX GRAVELLE, Winchester

A town with a little flavour

Re: Beer, blood, broken glass, Nov. 5.

I have been reading the Citizen for more than 40 years, and the piece by Brian Doyle on the Elmdale House Tavern is the best I have ever seen in the newspaper.

Congratulations to Doyle. A reminder that this town once had a little more flavour than Queen Victoria might have counted on.

DAN TURNER, Ottawa

Military pressure from U.S.

Re: How U.S. election will affect Canada, Nov. 5.

Canada is already under military pressure from the U.S., and will continue to be. But it is incorrect to suggest that Canada doesn't spend enough on the military as a percentage of our GDP.

On the contrary, NATO's 2011 analysis of defence expenditures shows that the average for all 28 members is 1.47 per cent of GDP. NATO notes that Canada's military spending is 1.4 per cent of its GDP, on par with Germany (1.4 per cent), Norway (1.5 per cent), Denmark (1.4 per cent), the Netherlands (1.3 per cent) and Italy (1.4 per cent). The trend for these countries, given their dire financial circumstances, will be to continue to cut spending deeply. Comparing actual dollars spent on the military, which is a much better measurement, Canada is sixth highest after the U.S., the U.K., France (which are all nuclear armed), Germany and Italy.

It's true that the White House will be pressuring allies such as Canada to continue to spend billions of dollars on U.S.-built weaponry, given the country's unacceptably high unemployment rate.

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper has already proven, he's willing to commit to buying the U.S.'s F-35 stealth fighters without a firm price and without any requirements for Canadian jobs. I'm sure the next U.S. president will be very happy with Harper.

STEVEN STAPLES,
Rideau Institute, Ottawa

Support for veterans

Re: Veterans losing federal jobs to 'surplus' employees, Oct. 29.

Our Conservative government recognizes that employment is an important factor to successfully making the transition from military to civilian life for veterans. That's why I recently asked the Public Service

Commission to explore options to provide medically released Canadian Forces members with hiring priority in the public service.

Veterans Affairs has taken steps to increase the number of former CF and RCMP members working with the department, including opening internal competitions and taking CF experience into greater account during the hiring process. We also hired Lt.-Gen. Walter Semianiw who is now our new assistant deputy minister, to strengthen the relationship with DND.

Our government is also supporting important initiatives such as Helmets to Hardhats Canada. We launched this program and it is already connecting veterans with high-paying jobs in the construction industry across the country.

We are engaging in partnerships to improve the transition process for veterans, and to support this, we announced funding earlier this week to support the Veterans Transition Program.

This groundbreaking, group-based therapeutic program provides valuable assistance to transitioning veterans. The funding provided by our government will allow the Veterans Transition Program to expand nationwide.

Our Cutting Red Tape initiative is providing veterans and their families with hassle-free access to the information and benefits that they need. For example, the recently launched Veterans Benefits Browser makes it easier for veterans to find information on benefits and services, and the My VAC Account provides an online access point for veterans to securely connect with the department and access the information important to them 24/7.

Canada's veterans and their families can have confidence that our government will continue to stand up for them and will ensure they have the benefits and support they deserve.

STEVEN BLANEY,
Minister of Veterans Affairs

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